

IRAQ

- I. Qasim's 27 March commutation of death sentences on several key officials of former royal regime, together with his 30 March suspension of death sentences on Baathists for last October's assassination attempt, is latest rebuff of Iraqi Communists.
 - A. Communists had been clamoring loudly for executions.
 - B. Among the 12 of old royal government whose lives were spared are ex-Foreign Minister Fadhil Jamali (sentence commuted to 10 years' imprisonment), ex-Deputy Chief of Staff Gen. Daghistani (3 years' imprisonment), and Nuri Said's son-in-law Khalil Kanna (10 years' imprisonment).
 1. Clemency probably prompted mainly by Qasim's concern over sentiment in army, where Daghistani very popular, and desire to curry favor in religious circles by announcing commutations on eve of holiday at end of Ramadan.
 - C. Commutations and suspensions followed number of moves against Communists in recent weeks, including sacking of pro-Communist Minister of Agrarian Reform and Oil affairs Kubba; licensing of Communist dissident group and rejection of application for license by orthodox Communists; forceful repression of Communist-inspired wave of strikes.
- II. Latest reports show increase in tensions and some deterioration in public order.
 - A. Clashes on 21 and 22 March between Communists and anti-Communists in Baghdad resulted in troops firing on demonstrators.
 - B. Major clash occurred in Basra on 19 March, reportedly resulting in 15 injured and 50 to 75 arrested.

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C. Regime has increased security precautions throughout country.

III. Showdown between Qasim and Communists may be approaching.

A. Qasim now more dependent than ever on the army, and key army officers, mostly anti-Communist, will probably play a vital role in future developments.

IV. Regime recently showing bit more friendly attitude toward West.

A. Government now actively seeking bids by Western firms on some projects in development program which has bogged down.

B. US and other Western countries have been asked to help fill some 200 teaching positions at Baghdad University.

C. Disappointment with and some criticism of Bloc economic and educational assistance recently voiced to American Embassy personnel by Iraqi officials.

D. Strong Soviet effort to counter this trend likely.

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V. State of Qasim's nerves and mental health remains riddle.

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B. Earlier we had many reports to effect Qasim non sui compos; we inclined to believe his sometimes erratic behavior may be due simply to tensions from overwork and natural concerns over internal conflicts.

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